



Ampersand Consulting

March 3, 2011

Governor Dannel P. Malloy
Connecticut State Capitol
Room 200
Hartford, CT 06106

Appropriations Committee
Room 2700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Malloy and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

All of us understand how many tough decisions you face as you attempt to balance Connecticut's budget. I'm writing to ask you to reconsider your plan to cut seven staff members at the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA). As the former CEO of the Hartford Region YWCA and as a consultant who works with many nonprofit and public sector organizations that serve children and families, I have seen firsthand the difference the Office of Child Advocate (OCA) makes.

Proposed changes in the budget will effectively eliminate the independent oversight and accountability for state-funded services to children and hinder the OCA's capacity to meet its mandate. The proposal to eliminate all staff positions at OCA except for the Child Advocate and one other staff member to support the Child Fatality Review Panel leaves no resources to oversee the care and treatment of thousands of children served by more than eight agencies whose combined budget is approximately 4 billion dollars. Additionally, the Governor proposes to reduce OCA operating expenses by 90%, a proposal that really means OCA will cease to exist.

OCA has consistently and expertly used its staff to identify costly and duplicative bureaucracy in state-run and state-funded agencies, facilities, and services for children. OCA investigations often are the sole catalyst for change to harmful practices to children across numerous state agencies.

Reducing the OCA's multidisciplinary, expert staff from nine to two effectively eliminates the OCA's ability to conduct the critical work of reviewing the deaths of children and making recommendations for systemic improvement, investigating complaints from parents, children, concerned professionals and

state agency employees; and investigating the care and treatment of children placed in congregate care settings and in juvenile detention and adult prisons, hospitals, schools and state funded community programs.

Even with new leadership in place, Connecticut must address the continued slow progress of compliance with Juan F. Outcome measures, the growing number of children placed out of state, and the increasing number of youth requiring access to adult systems of care after years in our children's systems. Connecticut must identify and stem the pathways of youth from child welfare and schools to juvenile detention and adult prison. Connecticut's children are our new leaders still need an independent oversight agency with specialized knowledge, access and authority to investigate and take action on behalf of our most vulnerable children.

Perhaps some reduction in OCA's budget is necessary. But please do not make cuts that in effect will make it impossible for the agency to safeguard our children.

Sincerely,



Janna Pedersen
Principal